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Smith, Anne MJ.; Duncan, Peter; Edgar, David; McColl, Julie

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Responsible and sustainable farm business: Contextual duality as the moderating influence on entrepreneurial orientation

Dr Anne MJ Smith

Glasgow Caledonian University, Cowcaddens Road, Glasgow, G4 0BA,
Scotland, United Kingdom

W: <http://www.gcu.ac.uk/gsbs/staff/annesmith/>

Dr Peter Duncan

Prof David Edgar

and

Dr Julie McColl

Abstract

Tackling poverty and injustices, protecting the environment, ensuring equality, all underpin the ideas of *being* a responsible business (United Nations 2015). Yet there are many arbitrators of what constitutes a responsible business and include customers, the media as well as global organisations. Rethinking the farm business, post COVID-19, post BREXIT and in relation to Entrepreneurial Orientation of farmers is timely and essential to tackle crisis, uncertainty and sustain a healthy rural ecosystem. The farm is part of a this complex rural ecosystem which is characterised by dichotomies and opposing duality yet by understanding the competing tensions it is possible to know how to moderate and navigate a path towards responsible business.

Data from one case farm is presented and then findings are triangulated through a grounded thematic data analysis of five in-depth interviews with other farms from the same community. This is an ethnographic study into contextual dualities. By constructing an empirically informed framework explaining how duality is moderated there is an opportunity to re-examine farmer EO, how things have been done and how they might be done by future generations.

Contribution to policy and practice is intertwined, through identification of moderators for duality the rural ecosystem can be better managed through effective policy design and responsible practice at grass roots. Accelerated professionalisation in the agricultural industry involves combining the rich and irreplaceable knowledge of the older generations and shaping the values and behaviours of new generations in relation to the agenda on sustainability and responsible business; effective policy will enable practice to emerge as responsible decision making in the rural business ecosystem. By synthesising EO (De Rosa et

al, 2019; Vesala et al, 2007) with farmer mentality (Richards, 1973) we can theorise and inform how to re-educate future generations in responsible and sustainable farm businesses.

Introduction

In 2015, 193 governments of the United Nations agreed to pursue 17 Sustainable Development Goals – SDGs (United Nations, 2015), including tackling poverty and injustices, protecting the environment, and ensuring equality. Rethinking the farm business in this way requires understanding competing tensions and subsequent dualities (European Commission, 2011). At this point in time, post-Brexit, United Kingdom (UK) agriculture is in transition. Farming policy and support scheme development will be devolved to national government although the current framework will stay in place until new payment systems are agreed, then *The Agricultural Bill* (2020), which favours public purpose positioning through productivity and sustainability measures, will be introduced (no budgetary specifics are available). In addition, response to Sustainability Development goal number 2 - end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and sustainable agriculture - signals deeper alignment with global environmental and public purpose positioning. Compounded with COVID 19, UK farmers face a truly uncertain future. Navigating this uncertainty requires an entrepreneurial mind set. Therefore, understanding the entrepreneurial orientation (EO) of farmers becomes highly relevant, especially in traditional family farms. The reality is that new ways of doing things is not choice but necessity.

Agriculture, fisheries and manufacturing (the ‘old economy’) were, prior to the birth of the World Wide Web and the ‘new economy’, the backbone of the developed world’s economic system. Today in western innovating economies, old economy firms are no longer dominant but instead provide industrial and economic growth for Developing Nations (United Nations, 2012). Yet despite this economic shift, the UK old economy firms continue to operate and

pursue profit as a focus, especially in agriculture. In recent times, through a renaissance of regional artisan rural land based firms, new supply chains have emerged suggesting that market opportunity, competition and profit remains, in some cases, in the form of diversification (Veidal and Flaten, 2014).

In rural enterprise, commercial entities might be sole proprietors, partnerships or limited companies, many are family farms. In order to capture all typologies of commercial farm business, we refer to the broader term 'firms'. Firms are constrained by their context and according to Müller and Korsgaard (2018), spatial rurality remains a significant feature of how entrepreneurial the rural land based entrepreneur might be. In farming there is scope to brand spatiality and in a study examining entrepreneurship in the rural, through planning applications, Smith (2008) identified notable concentration on asset conversion by agricultural firms in periods of EO.

In the UK, agriculture and the rural food and drink sector together, present as an ecosystem of producers, suppliers, social structures and place, underpinned by old and new economy characteristics. The old economy has a focus on production, vocational education, command and control systems and mechanisation; the new economy focuses on digitisation, professionalisation and knowledge based education. Indeed, agriculture is an interesting example of a robust traditional economic base that nurtures new economy supply chains and value adding activity (Savrul and Kilic, 2011). Despite these systems existing in symbiotic relationships, a rural business owner is exposed daily to the concept of duality. In this way, old economy characteristics function alongside new economy thinking, contrasting and opposing economic systems, with social and cultural challenges which constitute the context and ecosystem of their rural community (Hartel et al., 2014; Tang and Khan, 2007). Being situated means the organisational ability to be entrepreneurially orientated, grow, adapt and

be a responsible and sustainable business is affected by factors that include policy, infrastructure, logistics, remoteness, broadband accessibility, access to labour, human capital and cultural rituals (Burnett and Danson, 2017; United Nations, 2015).

The relevance of our study for scholars and policy makers is how these agricultural firms might be entrepreneurially orientated while simultaneously adopting a responsible business lens. Through a rural lens this study explains why the farm business is structurally a dichotomy and subsequently how they navigate duality, which in turn, moderates EO in relation to context (Giddens, 1984). This knowledge will enable policy makers to understand how agriculture, in the old economy, might manage competing tensions. Specifically, this paper addresses the following research question: *How can farms be entrepreneurially orientated through a responsible business lens?*

From previous work, Veidal and Flaten (2014:110) argue ‘The positive relationship between EO and non-financial performance suggests that farmers are entrepreneurial to make their workplace more interesting and challenging and not always primarily to bring increased profits or greater economic efficiency’. Further study of moderators and features that smooth duality would indeed be fruitful, improving overall wellbeing of those living in rural economies.

Our contribution is therefore twofold; firstly, examination of moderators for EO makes policy design better informed and thus more effective and purposeful for rural ecosystems (Kolinjivadi et al., 2019; Wynne-Jones, 2013). Secondly, knowledge around synthesising and smoothing competing tensions informs sustainable farm business strategies that in turn create rural ecosystem wealth (Hartel et al., 2014).

In summary, our contribution is a re-examination of EO in the farming context (De Rosa et al., 2019; Veidal and Flaten, 2014; Vesala et al., 2007) and better understanding farmer

mentality (Richards, 1973). Thus, re-educating future generations in responsible and sustainable farm businesses and accelerating professionalisation at grass roots level.

UK farmers offer an interesting study group as they can show hybridity, in part driven by regulation based on EU institutional compliance, but equally driven to be entrepreneurial through diversification to be profitable (Carter, 1998; Carter, 2001; McElwee, 2006; McElwee and Smith, 2012; Smith, 2008). A contextual problem of this nature is explored through ethnography of a farming community in the West of Scotland (Smith, 2008; Smith et al., 2009). One farm is examined in-depth, and results triangulated using five in-depth interviews with other farmers in the region. The ethnographic exposition involved recording field notes, during and after observation. Interviews were phenomenological (Cope, 2005), sampling purposive and triangulation particularly effective in terms of validating ethnographic field notes.

Theoretical underpinning is explored, unpacking concepts of EO, particularly arguments around Miller's (1983) concept of EO disposition and how such disposition is affected by various dualities (Stewart, 1991). Our paper is concluded by evidencing the importance of agricultural firm continuity in fragile rural communities, before discussing how EO is moderated socially, economically and culturally. Finally, our research question is addressed, providing some thoughts on trajectories for future research.

Structure and Duality

Giddens (1984) seminal work on structure and agency suggests that duality exists as we cannot separate how we engage and shape what we do, from the structures set by community, society and institution. Duality, in this modality, is criticised by Kort and Gharbi (2013) who cite Rose (1998) in terms of *conflation* as the main criticism of structuration theory; a problematic relationship between structure and agency. They proceed, arguing that structure

is analysed less than agency in Giddens' work and a limiting feature is analytical separation of structure and agency ie different agent interpretations of rules in structure result in interactions of individuals are not playing through. This means, for our farmer, structuration is limiting since power should be with individual and not structure. Yet, structure for farmers involves institutional power and does not fully explain dualistic relationships that exist between structure and the prosaic. On that basis, DiMaggio and Powell (1983) might help explain what is happening through institutionalism. Homogeneity in farming exists because of a subsidy system driven by the structures of rules, regulations homogeneity and institutionalism - Global SDGs, Policy and payment structures. Yet the duality is grounded in the heterogeneity of farmers as individuals and agents operating in a market place offering market based opportunity. Modern day farming is a competing tension between structure and agency and explains why duality exists in this context. These systems, institutions and structure create fundamental tension informing how individual and firm act, shape what we do and when we do it.

In practice old economy firms are homogenised, structured and heavily regulated. They engage in land based enterprise and directed by policy, in part to protect the natural world but also manage production and economic functions. It follows that to be entrepreneurially orientated one must navigate these dualities or as Veidal and Flaten (2014) suggest, begin to look inwardly and explore managerial influences on the firm. In this context, Giddens' structuration theory cannot satisfactorily explain farmer duality. Perhaps conflation is problematic enough that it is insufficient to address relationships between structure and agency and despite Giddens's work being established in western sociology, an alternative way for exploring duality is needed. One way is through the ancient Chinese philosophical lens of Yin-Yang, shaped by eastern philosophy and founded on interdependence, balance, harmony and holism (Fang, 2012; Li, 2012 and 2014). As an enhanced perspective on

duality, Yin Yang is more than duality and explains the prosaic, everyday life of farming and associated routine activities and events. Prosaics, according to Hjorth and Steyaert (2004), enable co-creation, and everyday routines at the same time. Thus duality exists as a result of the farmer mentality (Richards, 1973) where prosaic exists at the same time and place as EO. Alam (2015) argues concepts of Yin and Yang ('Yin-Yang') date back as far as 4000-2000 BC (see also Jing and Van de Ven, 2014; Li, 2011; Wang, 2012) representing a philosophy maintaining that everyday life features dualities lived in harmony (Li, 2014). Key features of Yin-Yang duality are contradiction, opposition and interdependence (Tang and Khan, 2007; Fang 2012), features commonly observed in island communities (Burnett and Danson, 2017) and in farm diversification. Duality of Yin and Yang invests importance in harmony, flow, interaction and interdependence, lending itself to principles of public purpose and sustainability (Li, 2011; Li, 2012) rather than (stereotypical) 'dualism' of Western views where one facet 'must' triumph over the other. For sustainability goals to be achieved, duality is a key concept and one of interdependency. When two competing factors exist at the same time, one factor might be moderated and smoothed by the strength of culture or farmer's mentality, yet simultaneously influenced by context and structural characteristics of an entrepreneurial operating environment (Mattsson and Tidstrom, 2015; Richards, 1973).

An Approach to Entrepreneurial Orientation

Risk taking for competitive advantage has long been considered an entrepreneurial strategy and in conjunction with innovativeness and proactiveness, is associated with EO (EO) at firm level. With entrepreneurship literature on EO heavily loaded towards studies on technology and high growth firms i.e. the new economy, there is less known about how rural firms, in the old economy - land based and regulated sectors - feature as being entrepreneurially orientated (Veidal and Flaten, 2014). Lomberg et al. (2017) observed differences in industry, firm and

environmental characteristics which changed the dynamic of EO; a phenomenon evident for high and low tech industries. Their sector based commonality analysis revealed nuances and extensions to current knowledge on EO showing difference between sectors and industries, concluding that EO dimensions need interpreted differently according to context. Yet context is not a constant condition, often situated and shaped by individual and community experiences and influenced by competing and contrasting agendas (McKeever et al., 2015). Notably, cultural capital or ‘the farmers’ mentality’ navigates and influences EO, and with cultural capital being grounded in a learned disposition, it becomes evident that a prosaic way of feeling and behaving while reacting to changes to context is possible. However, there is scope to consider that, by professionalising farming at grass roots, current learned behaviours from old economy based learning environments can be challenged.

Entrepreneurial orientation attracts attention from academics (Miller, 1983; Covin and Slevin 1991; Lumpkin and Dess, 1996; Rauch et al., 2009; Covin and Lumpkin, 2011; Covin and Wales, 2011; Keil et al., 2017). Despite different perspectives, there is general consensus that EO signals levels of firm performance. However, key areas of contention exist between authors. Firstly, dimensionality attracts debate; with Miller (1983) suggesting EO is a disposition, a way of feeling or behaving, while others (Lumpkin and Dess, 1996) argue multiple dimensions more appropriate, particular characteristics with a sustained orientation. For the purposes of this article we position EO as a disposition, we do not intend to measure behaviours per se but instead seek to explore how the responsible and sustainable farm business navigates everyday dualities in entrepreneurial mode. Thus we take a unidimensional approach, examining the EO construct holistically; EO is ‘understood as a sustained firm level attribute represented by the singular quality that risk taking, innovativeness, and proactive behaviours have in common’ (Covin and Lumpkin, 2011: 863). Prior work on farmer EO by Vesala et al. (2007) uses EO to examine farmer entrepreneurial

capability. Through a model of self-categorisation they examine EO using economic, cultural social and contextual dimensions. Risk taking, growth orientation and innovativeness were measured as well as social and cultural dimensions. Evidently, there are those identifying as conventional farmers and others as portfolio farmers. Conventional farmers focus their EO towards the old economy structures and engage with traditional hierarchies and regulation, leading to fewer opportunities to be EO (Vesala et al. 2007). Portfolio farmers self-identify as being more entrepreneurially orientated through greater activity in diversification (Carter, 1998) and engaging with opportunities in the new economy (Savrul and Kilic, 2011). Structural features of economic systems (Veidal and Flaten, 2014) are fundamental to understanding a Farmer's EO.

Entrepreneurial orientation as a strategy making process discussed by Rauch et al. (2009) drawing on Mintzberg (1973) suggest that EO 'may be viewed as the entrepreneurial strategy-making processes that key decision makers use to enact their firm's organisational purpose, sustain its vision and create competition advantage' (Rauch et al., 2009: 763). As such, EO can manifest in strategy based decisions and firm performance from a unidimensional perspective. The notion of a 'responsible farmer' is composite and might well be examined from a strategy based perspective (McElwee and Smith, 2012) or indeed a taxonomy (McElwee, 2008). Perhaps a responsible farmer might be considered in terms of identity and they might even self-identify according to their values (Vesala et al., 2007). Being a responsible farmer is a value system and set of behaviours, enabling entrepreneurial turns in the life cycle of the farm (De Rosa et al., 2019) while simultaneously complying sustainable firm performance through agriculture policy and global frameworks such as the SDGs.

If, as Miller (1983) argues, EO is a composite phenomenon and if as Covin and Lumpkin (2011) suggest EO is a useful firm level concept to establish measures of firm

performance, then it suggests scope exists to view culture as part of one's context and a moderator of EO.

Examining Contextual dualities

In 2012 the World Summit delivered comment on the global agriculture industry with an aspirational statement, to achieve world food security by encouraging viable farming enterprise with 'liveable incomes' (United Nations, 2012: 6). In the UK and in more recent times, farm incomes have increased mainly in the dairy sector. However, the income range is broad and evidence of low incomes and subsidy dependency is recognised particularly in Less Favoured Areas and small upland farms (Scottish Government, 2020). SDGs have cemented the agenda (United Nations, 2015), so growth and/or profit may not be a key performance indicator for regional agricultural communities in every case, suggesting other social, cultural and economic influences featuring sustainable, responsible and realistic measures more appropriate. Duality is highlighted in this context of regulation, change and innovation; on one hand the farmer conforms to governmentality and institutionalism through regulation, on the other, entrepreneurial and innovative in competitive and diversified markets. High farm production costs require a subsidy system to assure low cost food to society, therefore conforming to policy regulation is inextricably linked to farm income (DEFRA, 2018). However, policy drives entrepreneurial activity through a push for on farm and off farm diversification. Ironically this model on one hand lends itself to the bureaucratic and hierarchical features of old economy and simultaneously stimulates innovation and new economy activity. The Scottish Farm Business Income business income statistics in 2020 highlight losses from traditional farming activity of £14600, noting losses are absorbed through off farm, contract and diversification, hence farm EO in new economy sectors whilst

remaining embedded in old economy structures (Scottish Government 2020). A dichotomy indeed, but clear from aspiration and action on the global and local stage that old economy agricultural firms are essential to global food security and the solution in achieving SDG Goal 2 Zero Hunger (United Nations 2015).

Tracking changes in EO over time cannot ignore cultural and social dimensions (Stewart, 1991). In other words, to understand why duality exists and how it is moderated we need to see contextualised data over time and place. Jack and Anderson (2002), and later McKeever et al., (2015) reveal how social constructs, community and connections to place combine to create and sustain, or even renew, identity (see also McKeever et al., 2014). Where entrepreneurs are a product of their place, shaped through socio-cultural means, they experience duality as both tensions (perhaps opposites) demanding agility and ambidexterity in organisations (Alsos et al., 2014; Huang, 2016; McKeever et al., 2014 and 2015). Routine, everydayness, humdrum is not associated with the concept of EO yet this is a facet of duality and the prosaic in farming (Hjorth and Steyaert, 2004).

In summary, these theoretical perspectives inform our new knowledge of contextual duality in responsible and sustainable farm business; the requirement to look inwards (Veidal and Flaten, 2014) and simultaneously outward, synthesising characteristics of old economy with of thinking from new economy. The following section details our approach and study methods.

Method

The recursive analytical process of ethnography is awkward to explain due to its very nature (Geertz, 2000). Ethnography requires researcher immersion in a cultural group. This approach has few but increasing examples in entrepreneurship, however it lends itself well to this study (Denzin, 1997; Johnstone, 2010). Clear and nuanced ethnography is the result of

extensive field notes gathered over periods of time enabling capture of culture, socio-economic underpinnings and explanations (Denzin, 1997; Johnstone, 2010; Van Maanen, 1988).

Observation and what is observed are equally crucial to the researcher (Geertz, 2000; Johnstone, 2010). As such, a holistic approach to recorded observation was used, ensuring a contextually-rich approach to description and explanation (Denzin, 1997) and embracing the anthropological nature of the research (Huang, 2016). We continue by providing details of our methods before reflecting on our study group, then we describe our data collection prior to data analysis.

Fieldwork

There are two distinct study phases. Phase 1 involved extensive fieldwork on a farm case study in context. This phase covered an extensive period of time and data capture, observations, interviews and field texts (Johnstone, 2010). Phase 2 spans a shorter time period involving interviews situated within the case farm community.

Ethnographers capture a daily experience and witness the prosaic and disruptions of farming life. It is this ethnographic locus from which the field texts are collected and the ethnography is constructed (Johnstone, 2010). Ethnography is personally situated. One of the authors was immersed in the main case and lives on a farm and in the farmer and farming context. Albeit subjectivity is criticised in qualitative research, McKeever et al. (2015) demonstrate how as a research team they work with one member immersed while remaining researchers monitor collection and retain objectivity. This process of ‘immersion’ and ‘monitoring’ was adopted in this study. Despite designing robust processes and frameworks for field text, field text construction legitimising the self in research is an ongoing feature of understanding culture

(Clandinin and Connelly, 2000; Johnstone, 2010). Developing analysis from ethnographic text involved reviewing data, several iterations, then sorting and organising content, during this latter process duality appeared in the data. Noted observations, scribbled comments, key sentences of interview transcripts, opposing characteristics and themes, content about rain then sun, about death and birth of livestock, plentiful summers and dark cold winters, the Yin Yang lens, simultaneously illuminating interdependency and opposing features. This lens brought order and meaning to the data.

The case study

One farming family case study was selected, providing in-depth foci (Perren and Ram, 2004; Yin, 1994). Although the fieldwork covered ten years, between 2009 and 2019, archived data from 1952 through to current times was available for analysis.

The farm location is West coast of Scotland, an area notable for short summers and high rainfall during winter. The farm is owned and run by father and son (Jack and John), a 6th and 7th generation farming family. The farmer, now 82, purchased the farm. The farm business until recently operated as a partnership with the older partner, although retired, remaining an equal financial partner. The farm is mid-sized with a commercial herd of 100 beef sucklers comprising of continental breeds as well as Scottish Aberdeen Angus crosses, covering 130 acres of owned land and renting a further 252 acres. The core business is to profit from the sale of 9-13 month old calves bred on farm. All stock is sold through a local mart and prices based on market value per kilo (Scottish Government, 2018). The farm receives a European Subsidy and the animal systems on the farm are organised according to common practices with mid-range costs (European Commission, 2011).

Triangulating case findings through in-depth interviews

Triangulation through data analysis of five in-depth interviews with other farm businesses in the community the case study was employed; Phase 2 of the study. (Muncey, 2010; Riessman, 1993; Smith, 2013; Smith, 2014). The following table, Table 1, outlines details of the case study and interview sample used in triangulation (Smith, 2014). Each interview is numbered for coding and analysis purposes (Alsos et al., 2011). The farm typology and notes of any diversification activity are collated (Alsos et al., 2003).

[Table 1 near here]

The sample for in depth interviews is within a ten-mile radius of the main case farm and situated in the rural parishes of three small towns on the West coast of Scotland. They were a purposive sample, selected on the basis that they all know each other and socialise with each other (a close knit community), they all do business together and are connected in some cases through marriage and in other cases through childhood friendships and schooling. They have all grown up together in the same culture and environment (Alsos et al., 2014). They are all in the same age group circa age 50 with parents working on farm with, again, similar ages circa 75 upwards. This study group also have children of similar ages. All participants in the study group claim between four and eight generations of farming lineage. The respondents span beef and dairy sectors, providing operational diversity, but they share the structural and conceptual dualities of farming; seasons, structures, death and birth. Cohesiveness of the study group was a particular curiosity and enables the study to understand learning through a community culture; a kinship (Alsos et al., 2014). Like for like characteristics establish this study group as being well embedded in old economy characteristics (Scottish Government, 2018 and 2019).

Findings and Data Analysis

The field texts containing conversations, collected since 2009, were coded and analysed using an inductive thematic analysis (McKeever et al., 2015; Muncey, 2010; Smith, 2014). The narratives which highlighted social, economic and cultural forces were extracted and constructed into a thick description and presented in the account below, a practice adopted from Johnstone (2007). The account contains the evidence of everyday duality.

Narrative, language and communication are integral to ethnography which captures understanding, interprets situations and describes and explains what is happening. Conceptual explanations and the use of respondents' voices show meaning and interactions where contexts are revealed and explained. The following presentation of data through thick descriptive writing (Geertz, 2000), should enhance reality and meaning, however, to assist readers, the dialect has been clarified and key points highlighted in bold highlighting factors that influence and moderate the EO of the farm business.

Exploring duality

Farming is an endless cycle. Farming very much reflects the natural world, and a key part of learning is working out how to live, harmonise and understand the Yin and Yang patterns e.g. cycles of good years of grass and bad years of grass, but never always good. There is always a transformation between one and the other. If it is very wet for a couple of years, the natural cycle will be to expect a dry year or two. However, this is an odd way to have to run a business. We asked Jack about these ups and downs:

*“Farming can be very up and down ok I could write a business plan, I could say **roughly** within £20,000 what investment I am making in that year and what income I am making in that particular year but you say to yourself if you’ve got a bad calving, calves are no[t] well, your **income can drop drastically**. Working with a bull that was flinging bull calves and BSE, and you’ve got to take foot and mouth into consideration – these things hit you in the face and you **don’t know they’re coming**.”*

Each year the farm expects 100 calves to be born. The farm always loses about 10% of the calves. Apart from calving, which runs between February and May, the other most stressful time for farmers is silage. Jack tells how he experiences the silage time and how he feels about it:

*“You went along a swath with a sort of thing and kept the prongs up a bit and shoved it along and you just carted that to the silage pit like that. I did make silage up there where the holly tree is and put it in off the top side but it was never very good. We are working with big bales now but I can see in the very near future there will be a silage pit going in up here. John is finding it **stressful** and he is saying to me if have got bales for many more years there’s going to be a **divorce in his house**. It’s the **anxiety of the uncertain weather patterns** making it very difficult, but that doesn’t bother me. I reckon it will come. But I was looking at the weather there and the weather’s to be good right through to Monday so we’ve **got a chance** to get some hay made. Our intentions were to do the hale on Grange Hill except the sides but it didn’t work out that way. But we’ve got an option we can bale it then we can wrap it.”*

It is normal for eighteen hour working days to get the silage job done over a period of weeks. The farming idyll, a lovely way to grow up on a farm with picnics in a freshly cut silage field, is tempered by Jack and John explaining the duality (the Yin and Yang) because with those perfect days are always the wet days, the stress and anxiety.

Sometimes it just never goes right and there is absolutely nothing you can do about it. A few fatalities with cows have also occurred. John was really upset about this and advised that he continues to go over in his mind why they died. Could he have done something different? Would a different intervention have made a difference? He is clearly upset.

No bills have been paid for a month now, delays in the CAP [Common Agricultural Policy of the European Union] payments mean that there is no money to pay anyone, worse still the overdraft is at its limit with no more security to offer the bank. The turnover trend shows a gradual increase from the birth of the farm business through a growth period with a dramatic decline in 2007. There are three notable peaks in turnover; Peak 1 1976 – 1979, Peak 2 1990 – 1992, Peak 3 2002 – 2003. Profit trends are stable until the late 1980s and early 1990s when they show more erratic behaviour. These patterns might be explained through the interaction and creation of new activity or diversification (Carter, 1998; Carter and Ram, 2003; McElwee, 2008; McElwee et al., 2006; Smith et al., 2009). In more recent times De Rosa et al. (2019) explain this phenomenon through the notion of ‘entrepreneurial turns’. In their study the authors explain how ‘entrepreneurial turns’ are when serendipity and life coincidences orchestrate resources, and family and life events are triggered by day-to-day occurrences. Opportunity exploitation in this fashion means that diversification and subsequent growth occurs through unplanned actions, triggers and events. Therefore, only through hindsight do some ‘entrepreneurial turns’ actually make sense, yet in the moment there is a natural life cycle. In our case, an ever-increasing gap between turnover and profit begins at around the same time as the diversification occurs, suggesting that diversification practices present a different operating cost base and might be less predictable than operating the core farm business (DEFRA, 2018). Such conditions require a different skill set from that of a farm business with no diversification (McElwee, 2008).

The events for the farm have been organised using McElwee and Bosworth's (2010) classifications of diversification and presented over a six-decade time period. The three notable peaks in turnover mentioned previously can be pinpointed around particular events. Peak 1 1976 – 1979 might be explained by an income generated from sale of land. Peak 2 1990 – 1992 might be explained as a new business is purchased and Peak 3 2002 – 2003

might be explained by the additional contracting work with silage and a retainer payment from a property developer.

The troughs encountered reflect the exit from a diversification activity. From this analysis the effects of change in diversification activity disrupts predictability of the lifecycle. Further investigations reveal that the reason the diversification activity, sawdust haulage, was withdrawn was attributed to changes in market forces and increasing costs. Increased farm exits (Smith, 2008) and reduced numbers of dairy farms (DEFRA, 2018) meant that overall demand in the industry fell. Peaks and troughs and specifically ‘turns’, according to De Rosa, et al. (2019) explain life cycle phenomenon and the entrepreneurial moments which appear through and over time. Hence life cycle transitions become very important to the farmer enabling proclivity for transitions between old and new economies as well as succession.

Jack sums things up referring to the need for the right mind-set to live a farm lifestyle:

*“We’re sort of medium-sized here we’re not hill by any manner of means but we are in an area where we could stock sheep if we wanted but I would say the cattle enterprise is the main thing. I don’t think at the end of the day it was a **risk** – as long as the bank was happy and I was paying the interest on the overdraft there was **nothing much worried me really** – at the end of the day I’m not really a worrier. Some people are worriers and some people will commit suicide because they are worrying that much. There was nothing worried me as such.”*

We [the immersed researcher and Jack] decided to visit the market, sometimes known as the mart, an old term to describe that place of exchange. We use the word exchange because

that's the place to exchange just about absolutely everything, not just the main commodities, also information, stories or predictions.

*“See him there he’s always here. He buys anything out of the rough ring, puts a bit flesh on and turns it back around and through here in 6 weeks ... **that's how he makes his money.**”*

It's essentially a trader's game, looking at ways to make money. It's interesting though, because it takes skill to do that and then there's risk.

Results from in-depth interviews

To triangulate emergent themes and dualities, Table 2 establishes the connections between the thematic areas of EO and what appear as the moderating influences. The transcripts were read and where there were discussions around EO, any moderating factor was highlighted.

[Table 2 near here]

By triangulating evidence from five interviews with the main field work we understand the following themes to emerge as Moderators for EO in the farm business; Harmony, Mutual inclusivity, Sustainability, Quality, Alertness and Balance. The following discussion tests the conceptual nature of these themes against current literature enabling us to address our research question before considering the significance of our findings in terms of implication on theory practice and policy; how farms might be entrepreneurially orientated while simultaneously adopting a responsible business lens?

Discussion

This article explains how responsible farm business might navigate duality which moderates EO in relation to their context (Giddens, 1984) and further explains why a negative relationship can exist between EO and financial performance (Veidal and Flaten, 2014). Farmers faced with dualities seek to navigate best outcomes. Best outcomes can range from an increase in income to a more harmonic life, to new friendships. These dualities are not all moderated by profit. Such is the nature of farming and building on De Rosa et al. (2019) it is evident that entrepreneurial ‘turns’ are a feature of duality and entrepreneurial moments are a phenomenon requiring EO. It stands that EO is not a sustained feature of the farm due to old economy structures but according to Richards (1973) there are deep culture values shaped by generations of family creating the prosaic; embeddedness of farmer mentality. Therefore, faced with an entrepreneurial moment, the farmer will navigate according to farmer mentality, which although it relates to culture may lack an EO. Responsibility is a cultural and structural feature arbitrated by the farmer and many others. Multiple arbitrators create confusion and incompatible solutions. United Nations SDGs, the subsidy system, education in the agricultural industry, customers and suppliers and the media, a very complex and demanding ecosystem.

Emergent themes from analysis provide navigation of the ecosystem: Harmony (Fang, 2012); Mutual inclusivity (McKeever et al., 2014); Sustainability (Smith et al., 2009; United Nations, 2015), Quality - *in relation to interdependency* (Burnett and Danson, 2017), Alertness (Tang and Khan, 2007); Balance (Li, 2012 and 2014). In light of EO tensions and dualities (Veidal and Flaten, 2014), these themes shape an empirically constructed framework enabling current thinking about responsible farm business to be tested and stretched.

The framework concepts in Table 3 underpin what might influence development of a responsible farm business in relation to dualities and EO.

[Table 3 near here]

Despite extensive study into EO, without context we lack the insights at sectoral level (Covin and Lumpkin, 2011; Covin and Slevin, 1991; Covin and Wales, 2011; Keil et al., 2017; Lumpkin and Dess, 1996; Miller, 1983; Rauch et al., 2009). Our framework in Table 3 is context specific and serves as a suggestion that, shaped by social context and being adept at managing dualities, the result can be responsible business, further professionalising the industry through a questioning approach to everyday activities (United Nations, 2015).

Data suggests that routine is particularly important in people's lives, creating harmony and balance (Hjorth and Steyaert, 2004) and increasingly relevant to positive living (Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Number 3: Good Health and Well-being). However, such routine must be perceived by the individual as harmonic or EO is moderated if the routine is disrupted in an unacceptable or uncomfortable way (SDG Number 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth).

We adjust our perceptions and interact with our environment (SDG Number 15: Life on Land around protecting, restoring and sustainability). In turn, we perceive and cognitively process our rationale for management decision making. These adjustments will shape EO towards risk, innovation and pro-activeness (SDG Number 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure around building resilience and fostering innovation). Perceptions of EO can be shifted according to social pressure and personal circumstance (SDG Number 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions leading to peaceful and inclusive societies).

We tend to view much in terms of mutual inclusivity. However, as evidenced in farming culture, very little exists without interdependencies, oppositions and contradictions, a phenomenon only too well understood in other fragile communities such as islands (Burnett and Danson, 2015). As such, navigating contradictions and differences can depend on cultural norms as well as social teachings developed from an early age (Alsos et al 2014; Richards, (1973). Culture therefore does moderate how dualities are navigated.

What does it all mean? This article set out to examine how farms might be entrepreneurially orientated while simultaneously adopting a responsible business lens. By constructing an empirically informed framework there is an opportunity to test current thinking and question how the farm business navigates underpinning moderators that manage EO dualities faced daily by farmers. As farm businesses face more political shocks, social concerns and drive towards sustainability, businesses are only beginning to be tested in terms of responsibility.

Conclusion

In the final analysis, if responsible business is time and context bound, who is the best arbitrator? Surely there are ethical or moral considerations? Perhaps so, but the argument is about the existence and navigation of duality and there are multiple arbitrators. The ecosystem surrounding the farm is so complex and reaches deep into the local, and extends to the global. Many contextual structures, including policy and practice, will regulate and arbitrate a responsibility value upon farmers. How can farms be entrepreneurially orientated through such a complex responsible business lens? This study contributes to the agenda on sustainability and responsible business by raising awareness of challenges faced by rural business and agricultural communities. Contribution builds on studies from De Rosa et al, (2019) on entrepreneurial moments and turns, Vesala et al, (2007) on EO in farm context and Richards, (1973) on farmer mentality. The aforementioned articles when synthesised enables

this study to focus on examining the moderators for EO in the farm context. Competing tensions identified through data analysis establish the moderators of duality, which inform the trajectory that could accelerate industry professionalisation for future generations.

Study limitations include sample size and generalisability which are often features of case work and ethnographic studies. However, farmers as a study group share deep contextual features that illuminate the shared dualities, it is the duality itself that is generalisable (e.g. daily routine, day and night, life and death) and which can be navigated using moderators common for all i.e. facing multiple economic systems, diverse arbitrators, pressures of dichotomised income streams and global directives.

As a result of moving the farmer EO agenda forward, future research requires deeper insight into managing transitions and mediating demands of old economy and new economy characteristics. Increased professionalisation in the farming industry will result from engagement with new generations, disrupting elements of generational proclivity, upskilling in science and technologies, and increasing knowledge that is not only farm taught but also globally driven through structural consortiums (industrial, governmental and educational). In rural contexts and especially agriculture, a post-COVID 19, post-Brexit and SDG driven policy means there will be change (United Nations, 2015). The response should be sensitive to how things have been before and how things should develop. Old economy land based firms are often *the* economic system supporting regional and fragile island and rural communities and according to Burnett and Danson (2017) supply opportunities for income in declining areas with high levels of poverty. Therefore, it is important for vulnerable communities to maintain and grow an economic system that features entrepreneurially orientated firms which at the same time are responsible and sustainable businesses. This is

why it is important for scholars to understand the socio-economic and cultural dynamic of duality.

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